

Dear Legislators;

I am a 69 year old grandmother of four, retired after 30 years of employment with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. I earned a Ph. D. in Social Policy from the Heller School at Brandeis University; am a member and sing in the choir at the First United Methodist Church in Milford; am married to a (retired) high school teacher, and gave birth to three daughters: one a lawyer, one a family practice physician and Dean of Admissions at Boston University Medical School, and one an elementary school instructor for English Language Learners. I have three siblings, and a 98 year old mother who resides with my husband and me.

I am also a birthmother.

In 1969 I gave birth to my firstborn (the lawyer, mentioned above). Being unmarried, I surrendered my child for adoption in accordance with the social expectations of the time. I never asked for, nor was I ever promised, anonymity from my child. Indeed, when she was seven years old I approached the agency that handled her adoption and offered to be available to her or her parents if the need arose. A year later, unable to tolerate not knowing whether my child was alive or dead, healthy or ill, cherished or abused, I was able to learn my daughter's adoptive identity, and began what turned out to be a 30 year journey following her life from a distance. During that 30 year period I contacted my daughter several times, each time offering to begin a relationship of her choosing. Finally in 2007 my daughter contacted me and said that the time was right for us to get to know each other. In the thirteen years since we have spent many afternoons and evenings together. She has met her sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandmother, all of whom were delighted to make her acquaintance.

I am writing as a mother to tell you that I believe that all adoptees have an absolute right to their original identifying information, including their original birth certificates, and that this right outweighs any expectations or assumptions of privacy that any mother may hold. In addition, in my experience, and according to the (literally) hundreds of birthmothers I have spoken or corresponded with in the last 50 years, not one woman was ever promised

anonymity from her child by any adoption agency staff. Of course, these women (and girls) had an expectation of privacy, which is to say that agency staff would not "broadcast" their circumstances to uninvolved parties. But no one was promised anonymity from their own child. In fact, in many cases the applicable laws at the time of surrender allowed that adopted children could obtain their original birth certificates upon request at the age of majority.

Please do not use mothers as an excuse to prevent adoptees from accessing their own birth information. Please support Senate Bill 113, and give adopted adults the same access to their (original) birth information that other citizens have.

Sincerely,

Gail M. Perry, Ph. D.

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